

COOPERATIVE ECONOMIC INSECT SURVEY REPORT

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LARGE YELLOW UNDERWING: New county records have been confirmed from Thomas, Decatur and Stanton counties.

HONEY BEES: On September 22 I received a call of a bee stinging incident near Uniontown, Kansas. The caller explained that a bulldozer operator had been severely stung the previous Friday and had been taken to the hospital. The dozer operator had pushed over a large hollow oak tree and was immediately attacked by the bees. He was rescued by coworkers and taken to the hospital in Ft. Scott. The rescuers were also stung several times. One worker stated that the bees chased them back to their pickup truck which was about 250 yards from the hive. Work was halted at the construction site pending removal of the bees. Upon arrival at the site I was directed to the tree which was now lying next to the stream. I directed other individuals that were at the site to leave the area (they did not need much encouragement) and proceeded to put on the bee suit. I took a sweep net and began collecting bees. As soon as the net made a couple of passes in front of the hole I was immediately attacked and was soon covered with over a thousand bees. After collecting the sample I began the process of eliminating the hive. The next day Tom Sanders, the area specialist, joined me to survey the area for additional hives and none were found and no bees were observed on the flowers in the area. It was later learned the individual that was stung was stung over a thousand times and had nearly died. He was released from the hospital after a couple of weeks but is still suffering from the effects. A sample of the bees was sent to a lab in Kansas for DNA analysis to determine if they were the Africanized strain. A sample was also sent to Arizona for a morphological analysis. Results from both tests concluded the bees were European honey bees without Africanized characteristics.

While this type of attack is very unusual it is not unprecedented. A number of years ago a dog, which was in its pen, was killed near Great Bend, Kansas after being attacked by honey bees. That same year a horse in Southwest Kansas was also attacked. Both of these incidences were during a period of very dry weather and it was believed the bees were defending the water that had been in the pens with the animals. Water was not the issue at the Uniontown site but lack of good forage in the area may have been a contributing factor in the bees exhibiting such aggressive behavior. This hive was not a particularly large one. The hive was estimated to contain about 5,000 bees.

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